

Saltcedar

Tamarix ramosissima

A time bomb for your water resources

This species has been called one of the “World’s Worst” invaders. Saltcedars can dry up springs because of their enormous water usage and sterilize the soils around them by depositing accumulated salts on the surface. They form monocultures that dominate riparian areas and thus reduce native plant and animal diversity. They are not used as browse by wildlife or domestic livestock.

Although there are invasive saltcedars in central Washington, there are none in Asotin County. Not yet. Due to the potential damage that saltcedars can do to springs and streams, landowners need to be able to recognize them. New infestations need to be identified and aggressively treated.

Saltcedars are deciduous and may grow shrub-like or tree-like, sometimes reaching 20 feet in height. The leaves are scaly and look ‘cedar-like’. They reproduce by buried stems and roots as well as by the hundreds of thousands of seeds that are produced annually. They are easily recognized at a distance in the early spring by their brilliant bright masses of tiny pink flowers produced in a spike-like fashion.

One of the problems in recognizing this weedy species and treating it before it becomes a problem is the fact that invasive saltcedars and ornamental saltcedars look almost identical. There are no invasive saltcedars in Asotin County (that I know of), however, ornamental saltcedars are relatively common. Most of the ornamental saltcedars are found within the urban areas of Asotin and Clarkston (only three of them are found in rural locations). The easiest method to determine the invasive from the ornamental is the length of bloom time. The ornamental saltcedars have a relatively short bloom, lasting about one month, in the early spring. The invasive saltcedars will bloom for many months.

A great example of an ornamental saltcedar can be found along the east side of Hwy 129, about one half mile north of Asotin. It is directly across the road from Jetco Machine and Fabrication. The tree will turn into a mass of spectacular pink spikes next spring. If you spot a saltcedar blooming later and/or longer than our ornamental types, please call the Asotin County Weed Office at 243-2098, for help in identification and treatment. We can keep Asotin County saltcedar-free with well informed landowners and an aggressive treatment program.

Blooming saltcedar



Mr. & Mrs. Robert G. Young @ USDA-NRCS PLANTS Database / **USDA NRCS.**
**1992. *Western wetland flora: Field office guide to plant species.* West Region,
Sacramento, CA.**





Close up of the scaly cedar-like leaves